



US Forest Service Aviation Safety Alert



No. FS 09-02

July 31, 2009

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Subject: Rappel Equipment and Procedural Change
Area of Concern: Rappel Operations
Distribution: Rappel Bases

Discussion: This Safety Alert has been generated due to recent rappel events.

Required Action: All rappel bases shall **immediately discontinue** the practice of opening the Maillon Rapide tri-link on the HR-2 rappel harness for any purpose other than (1) changing a defective Forgecraft or Bourdon snap hook or (2) replacing the rubber O-ring/Kong Clip that secures the right soft loop to the right corner of the tri-link.

When it becomes necessary to change a snap hook or O-ring/Kong Clip, the work shall be performed by a qualified rappel spotter. After replacing the defective part, the locking nut on the tri-link shall be tightened with a wrench until it is not possible to unscrew the locking nut by hand (using fingers only, no wrench).

After the locking nut is tightened, a contrasting color of fingernail polish shall be used to apply a longitudinal witness mark on the uppermost facet of the locking nut extending $\frac{1}{2}$ inch onto the tri-link (red line on tri-link in Figure 1). The witness mark will permit a rappeller or rappel spotter to confirm through visual inspection that the locking nut is secure and has not rotated since it was tightened.



In addition, **discontinue immediately** the practice of using Kong Clips to keep the rappel locking snap hook eye located at the apex of the Maillon Rapide tri-link (this order applies to both Forgecraft and Bourdon snap hooks). The only approved accessory for positioning the snap hook at the tri-link apex shall be a 1 1/16" diameter rubber O-ring.

To install an apex O-ring, slip the O-ring over the tip of the snap hook (Figure 2), and slide the O-ring down the snap hook (Figure 3) and over the eye until the O-ring contacts the tri-link (Figures 4,5). Any qualified rappeller can replace a snap hook O-ring as long as they do not open the tri-link during the process.

Section 3.2 of the Interagency Helicopter Rappel Guide will be revised to reflect the changes described in this safety alert; hard copies of the IHRG will need to be updated by each owner of this guide. <http://www.fs.fed.us/t-d/rappel/index.htm>

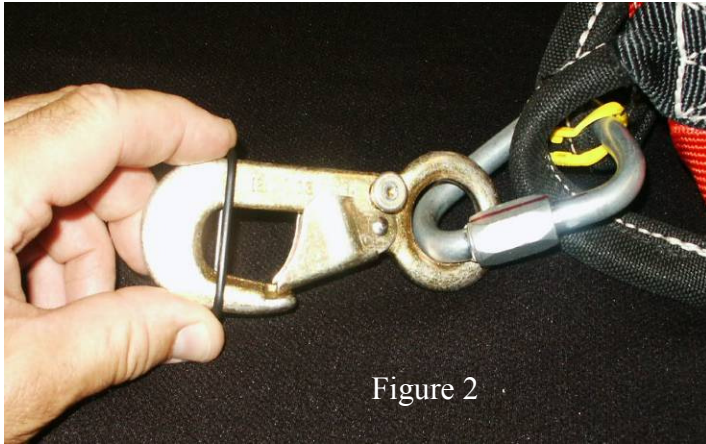


Figure 2

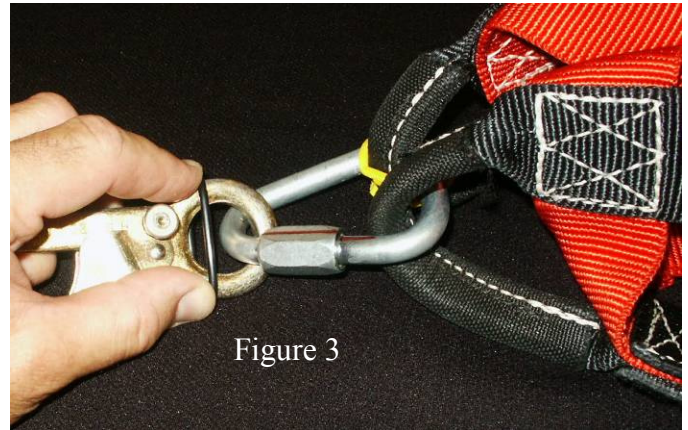


Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

If you have questions or concerns about this Safety Alert, please call Tim Lynch at 406-329-3958 or send an email to tlynch@fs.fed.us.

/s/ William C. Waterbury

William C. Waterbury

AD Risk Management
and Human Performance

/s/ Ron Hanks

Ron Hanks

Chief, Aviation Risk Management
and Training Systems